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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION: SECRETARY'S MIDDLE EAST VISIT, NORTH KOREAN
NUCLEAR TEST, LACK OF ARAB UNITY

1. SUMMARY: "Oman" columnist alleges that one aim of Secretary Rice's visit is to divide the Middle East into Arab versus Persian, Sunni versus Shia; "Al-Watan" notes that North Korea's nuclear test coincides with the West's "carrot and stick" policy towards Iran. A columnist in "Al-Watan" calls for a united Arab stance against Israel. Dailies give front page coverage to Secretary Rice's Middle East tour. END SUMMARY.

COVERAGE

2. Dailies front-paged Secretary Rice's Middle East tour, her calls for implementing the Quartet's agenda in Israel-Palestine, and her visit to Iraq.

BLOCK QUOTES: SKEPTICISM OVER SECRETARY'S VISIT

3. On October 7, a columnist in state-owned daily "Oman" (circulation 38,000) wrote about "Condi's Commodities...and the Illusions of Bush's Vision":

"U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice toured the region... [She] called for...a Palestinian government that would respect the principles of the Quartet. Rice's ostensible reason for the visit was to listen, but amongst themselves Arabs believed that before her arrival she had already divided Arabs into two categories: those who are constructive, and those who are destructive... On a regional level, Rice brought up the Iranian nuclear threat, forgetting the obvious and existing danger of Israel's nuclear program. She repeated the prevailing American-Israeli refrain about how the region is on its way to becoming two fronts, Sunni versus Shia or Arab versus Persian. Unfortunately, some of us lend credibility to that view... The refrain alleges that the so-called constructive party of Arabs...identify with American and Israeli interests, while those who are destructive adopt the alternate stance. [The American-Israeli refrain] reiterates the division between a good and an evil axis, but this time on a regional basis... The only new thing that Rice brought to the Arabs was to substitute calls for moderation for the previous calls for democracy... Condi [nickname transliterated in the original Arabic] did not visit the region to listen, or to revive what was once called the Peace Process... She came only to promote her goods and repeat the same old American agenda for the region...including some oft-repeated, honey-coated speeches that merely add illusions to Bush's blurry vision, and his slogan that lacks any serious content since he articulated a

two-state solution. Not even Bush remembers that slogan, except when he sees the need to drum up some illusions."

NORTH KOREAN NUCLEAR TEST AND IRAN

¶4. On October 7, a columnist in privately owned "Al-Watan" (circulation 42,000) wrote that "North Korea Imposes its International Agenda":

"North Korea's announcement of a nuclear test is no accident, at a time when the West is occupied with Iran through a carrot and stick policy... [President Bush's] popularity is at an all-time low, and controversy between Democrats and Republicans is fierce over the Iraq war and national security issues.... In addition to European negotiations meant to stop Tehran from enriching uranium, Washington is threatening to impose international sanctions. Furthermore, the U.S. has tried to use Rice's tour to mobilize regional states against Iran and to clarify the consequences of not doing so... Pyongyang is sending a message to many parties, the most important of which are Washington and Tokyo."

ARABS NOT UNITED AGAINST ISRAEL

¶5. On October 8, a columnist in "Al Watan" complained about the lack of a united Arab stance on Israel in an editorial called, "Why this Divide?"

"German Chancellor Angela Merkel said that her army's presence on Lebanese beaches is meant to secure Israel's right to exist and further explained that her country was not neutral and didn't wish

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to be so. Merkel was voicing the united stand of Europe and America. What are Arabs waiting for? Why don't they adopt a united stand against Israel and its endless crimes against Arabs? Continuous Western support for Israel failed to protect it from material and moral defeat by Hezbollah, a party that is small compared to Arab military power and that continues to modernize and develop on the precept that its first enemy is Israel. The Arab divide on the Israeli issue has widened the gap not only between Arab governments and their people, but also between political parties in the same country, as in Lebanon and Palestine...."

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